

What is claimed is:

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1. A program guide for an interactive information distribution system comprising:

- 5        a video layer; and  
         a graphics layer, where the graphics layer provides emphasis and de-emphasis of an object or objects in the video layer.

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10 2. The program guide of claim 1 wherein said video layer contains a video region and a graphical region.

3. The program guide of claim 1 wherein said program guide is generated in a central location of said  
15 information distribution system.

4. The program guide of claim 2 wherein the video region contains a video barker having associated audio.

20 5. The program guide of claim 2 wherein said graphical region contains a list of program titles.

6. The program guide of claim 1 wherein said emphasis and de-emphasis is performed by masking or revealing an  
25 object.

7. The program guide of claim 6 wherein, to perform said masking and revealing the graphics layer selectively changes an opacity of a region of the graphics layer.

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8. The program guide of claim 1 wherein the video layer and graphics layer are contained in an applet.

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9. The program guide of claim 1 wherein an identity of an emphasized object is controlled by a viewer.

10. The program guide of claim 1 wherein the emphasized  
5 object is a selectable object.

11. The program guide of claim 1 wherein the emphasized object is highlighted.

10 12. The program guide of claim 1 wherein said video layer contains a plurality of objects and said graphics layer emphasizes a select number of the objects and de-emphasizes a remainder of objects.

15 13. The program guide of claim 12 wherein said objects are a list of program titles.

14. The program guide of claim 1 wherein the graphics layer is prestored in a user terminal.

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15. The program guide of claim 1 wherein the graphics layer is transmitted to a user terminal.

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25 16. A method of interaction for a program guide:  
generating, within service provider equipment of an information distribution system, a bitstream representing a program guide having a video layer and a graphics layer;  
communicating said bitstream to subscriber equipment;  
converting, within said subscriber equipment, said  
30 bitstream into a display of said program guide.

17. The method of claim 16 further comprising the step of producing a mask/reveal overlay within said subscriber equipment.

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30 26. The method of claim 25 wherein each said program  
guide has audio that is common to multiple program guides.

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27. The method of claim 16 wherein all object identification functions are preformed locally to the subscriber equipment.
28. The method of claim 16 further comprising identifying an object and selecting the identified object to synchronously jump from broadcast mode to pointcast mode.
29. The method of claim 28 further comprising the step of returning to the broadcast mode when a pointcast transmission ends.
30. The method of claim 16 wherein identification and selection of an object causes the graphics layer to emphasize certain objects with respect to remaining objects.
31. The method of claim 16 further comprising the steps of:
- selecting an emphasized object in said program guide; communicating the selection to service provider equipment; and sending, from said service provider equipment, a multi-media bitstream corresponding to said selected object.
32. The method of claim 31 wherein said multi-media bitstream is a video-on-demand movie.
33. The method of claim 16 further comprising the steps of:
- selecting an emphasized object in said program guide; causing an event in the service provider equipment, where said event is on or more of tuning to an analog

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